January 17th, 2022

The Honorable Chris Holden  
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol Room 2114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

CC: The Honorable Ash Kalra; The Honorable Alex Lee; The Honorable Miguel Santiago

RE: AB 1400 (Kalra/Lee/Santiago) The California Guaranteed Health Care for All Act (CalCare) _ SUPPORT

Chair Holden,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), California’s largest grassroots senior advocacy organization representing 1 million seniors and their families strongly supports AB 1400 (the California Guaranteed Health Care for All Act). This bill would establish a single-payer health care system in California, called CalCare, that will ensure that all Californians, regardless of employment, income, immigration status, race, gender, or any other considerations, can get the health care they need, free at the point of service.

Today’s U.S. healthcare system is a complex, fragmented multi-payer system that still leaves wide gaps of coverage and poses significant issues of affordability. By streamlining payments and lowering per-capita health care spending, CalCare guarantees quality health care and long-term care without creating barriers to care or out-of-pocket costs.

When enacted, the Guaranteed Health Care for All Act (CalCare) will guarantee that every resident of California will receive comprehensive healthcare services. Individuals will have free choice of licensed health professionals and services. Covered benefits will include services to keep people healthy—mentally and physically— as well as those services that diagnose and treat diseases. In addition to emergency services, surgeries, and hospital stays, services such as long term supports and services (LTSS), mental health, palliative care, durable medical equipment, dental, vision, hearing, podiatry, and hospice are covered. CalCare has been crafted to provide a single high standard of safe, therapeutic care for all California residents in a manner that is financially sustainable. For seniors, this will include the following provisions that they currently do not have:

This plan will allow participants to choose any provider. It will have no network restrictions, no more surprise bills, and no out-of-pocket costs for covered services. It eliminates premiums and copays for Medicare Part B, C, and D for services Medicare does not cover. It offers lower prescription drug costs for the state and a covered benefit for all residents.

There will be regional planning to reduce overlap and duplication of expensive equipment and facilities. The provider rates that will replace and improve upon existing rates will be negotiated to ensure access, cost control and high-value services. Finally, there will be cost-savings from reduced bureaucracy, no more insurance company runaround, and no more bill collectors.

Diverse participants including ordinary citizens and representatives of labor and business, as well as various health care professionals and health policy experts will advise and help design the Healthy California program.

Our current healthcare system is broken. If we did not already know this, the pandemic has made this heartbreakingly clear. CARA believes that every California resident deserves guaranteed health care. This is what the original Medicare program was intended to do- we just never finished the job. Now we have an opportunity to establish an Improved Medicare for All system in
California that will guarantee health care to everyone – from the cradle to the grave, while reducing the costs to individuals, business, and to local and state governments. We can’t afford not to pass AB 1400.

For these reasons, CARA urges an Aye vote when AB 1400 comes before the Appropriations Committee.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly
Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)

Keith Umemoto
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)